

Message Text

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21/14

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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OMB-01 NSCE-00 /139 W

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R 240429Z OCT 73

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 885

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1266

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR KN CH

SUBJ: INDIAN DIPLOMAT'S OBSERVATIONS IN NORTH KOREA

1. INDIAN EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY RANJIT KALHA, RECENTLY RETURNED FROM A WEEK'S VISIT TO NORTH KOREA, PROVIDED USLO OFFICER WITH HIS OBSERVATIONS OF RAIL JOURNEY FROM PEKING VIA TANTUNG TO PYONGYANG AND VISIT BY AUTO TO PANMUNJOM. CHINESE TRAIN ON WHICH KALHA WAS TRAVELLING WAS JOINED AT BORDER BY THREE ADDITIONAL COACHES WHICH HAD COME DOWN FROM SOVIET UNION AND BY THREE NORTH KOREAN COACHES FOR TRIP TO PYONGYANG. KALHA NOTED THAT NORTH KOREAN WORKERS AT BORDER SCRUBBED THE CHINESE AND NORTH KOREAN COACHES, BUT APPARENTLY REFUSED THE SAME SERVICE FOR THE SOVIETS. AT THE YALU RIVER, KALHA SAID, OLD BRIDGE IS STILL DROPPED AND REMAINS IN RIVER BED.

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NEW YALU RIVER BRIDGE PARALLELS IT, AND ENTIRE NEW ROAD-

BED RUNS ALONG OLD TRACK WHERE THERE WERE SEVERAL OTHER DOWNED BRIDGES.

2. KALHA SAID HE FOUND PYONGYANG STRIKINGLY MODERN AND CLEAN IN CONTRAST TO PEKING. HE FOUND THE PEOPLE BETTER FED AND BETTER CLOTHED IN A VARIETY OF COLORS, IN CONTRAST TO THE BLUES AND GRAYS OF CHINA. FOOD PRICES, HE SAID, WERE ABOUT THE SAME AS IN PEKING. MILITARY WERE FAR MORE IN EVIDENCE IN PYONGYANG THAN PEKING, AND MOST HAD THE DISCONCERTING HABIT OF CARRYING THEIR WEAPONS EVERYWHERE THEY WENT. KALHA DESCRIBED FREQUENT TRUCKLOADS OF SOLDIERS MOVING THROUGH THE CITY, AND NOTED THAT THE MILITARY TRUCKS WERE NORMALLY SHINY NEW SOVIET MODELS WHEREAS LOADS OF CIVILIANS WERE CARRIED IN TRUCKS THAT APPEARED FOUR OR FIVE YEARS OLD.

3. SECURITY CONTROLS WERE OMNIPRESENT AND HEAVY-HANDED. THE BORDER CROSSING TOOK AN HOUR-AND-A-HALF ON EACH SIDE, AND IN CONTRAST WITH PEKING, KALHA FELT HE WAS CONSTANTLY UNDER SURVEILLANCE. ON THE MOTOR TRIP TO PANMUNJOM HIS CAR WAS STOPPED TWENTY MILES OUTSIDE OF PYONGYANG AND SENT BACK TO THE CAPITAL FOR A MISSING CHOP ON THE TRAVEL PERMIT. AFTER IT WAS SECURED, HIS CAR WAS STOPPED ANOTHER FIVE TIMES FOR SECURITY CHECKS ALONG THE TWO HUNDRED KILOMETER ROUTE. NEAR KAESONG KALHA WAS PUZZLED TO ENCOUNTER TWO DROPPED BRIDGE SPANS WHICH APPEARED TO BE OF RECENT VINTAGE. AT BOTH SITES THEIR CAR HAD TO FORD WATER ABOUT KNEE DEEP.
BRUCE

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